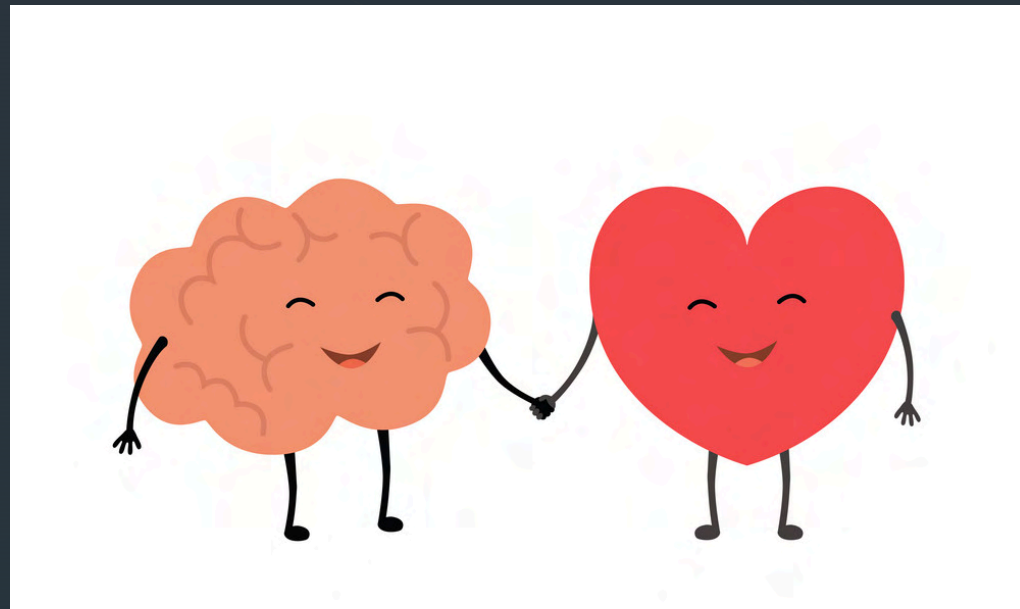


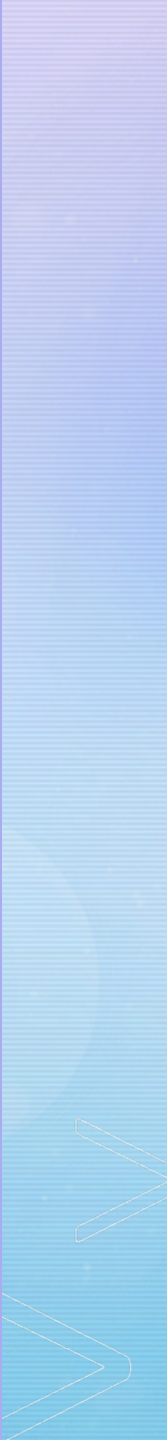
ACT Mindfully: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with Children & Adolescents

▶ Rachel Hopkins, Psy.D.

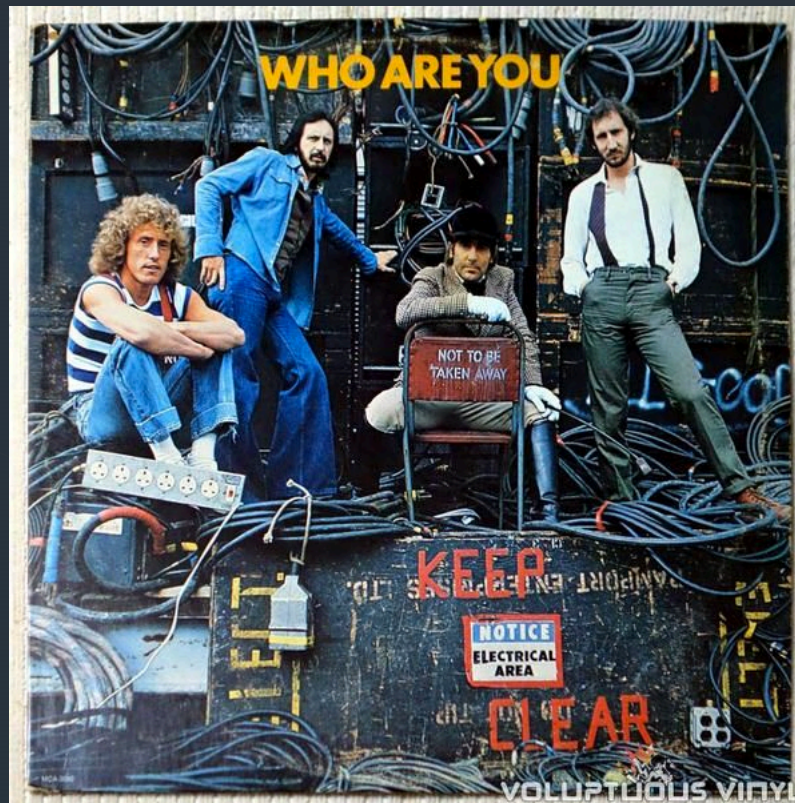




About Me

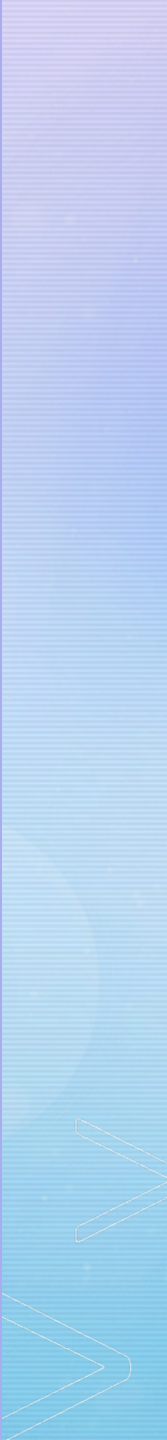
- Broad clinical interests: childhood trauma and bereavement, family systems, anxiety and mood disorders, behavioral dysregulation
 - Therapy and assessment
 - Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology from Widener University
 - Certified School Psychologist in PA
 - Program Director of Anxiety and Mood team at UCEBT
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Poll!





Learning Objectives

- Describe ACT and its core components using age appropriate language to kids and their families
 - Adapt ACT tools to a younger population
 - Increase openness to experiential exercises
- 

Experiential Exercise

ELEPHANT BREATHING



Stand with your feet wide apart and your arms dangling in front of your body like an elephant's trunk. As you breathe in deeply through your nose, raise your arms up high above your head. Then slowly swing your arms down again as you breathe out through your mouth.

BUBBLE BREATHING



Sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Begin by imagining you are holding a bubble wand. Breathe in deeply and then, as you breathe out slowly and gently, imagine you are blowing bubbles into the room. Imagine the bubbles are filled with peace or love or happiness and that you are filling the whole room with a peaceful, happy feeling. As you keep breathing slowly and blowing your imaginary bubbles, feel your body become calm and relaxed.

BALLOON BREATHING



Sitting in a comfortable position, place your hands around your mouth as if you were about to blow up a balloon. Take a deep breath in through the nose and, as you slowly exhale through your mouth, start to spread your hands out as if you are blowing up a great big balloon. Hold your hand position as you inhale again and then spread your hands further as you exhale. Once your balloon is as big as it can be, gently sway from side to side as you release your balloon up into the sky.

SHOULDER ROLL BREATHING



Choose a comfortable sitting position. As you take a slow deep breath in through your nose raise your shoulders up towards your ears. Breathe slowly out through your mouth, lowering your shoulders as you exhale. Repeat slowly, rolling your shoulders up and down in time with your breath.

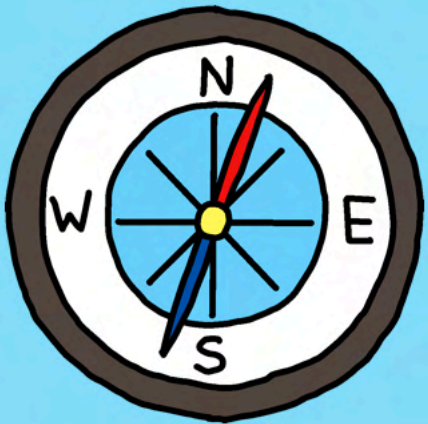
Introducing ACT to Kids and Families

According to the ACBS Website:

- “Developed within a coherent theoretical and philosophical framework, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a unique empirically based psychological intervention that uses acceptance and mindfulness strategies, together with commitment and behavior change strategies, to increase psychological flexibility. Psychological flexibility means contacting the present moment fully as a conscious human being, and based on what the situation affords, changing or persisting in behavior in the service of chosen values.”

Introducing ACT to Kids and Families

- Goal: to help kids live a life that is meaningful and fulfilling
- **Accept:** being willing to experience whatever thoughts and feelings we have
- **Choose:** figuring out what and who is important to you
- **Take Action:** take action to move in the direction you want to go



The “Mini Adults” Trap

Adults

- Adults can become afraid of their thoughts and feelings or rigid or avoidant in their actions
- ACT helps adults practice turning toward values through committed action to live lives with less pain, stress, symptoms, or problems

A flexible growth approach

- Focuses on teaching, modeling, and shaping flexible thoughts, feelings and actions **before** psychologically inflexible patterns have set in

6 in 3 in 1

Psychological Flexibility

Be Present

Do What Matters

Open Up

Attention to Present

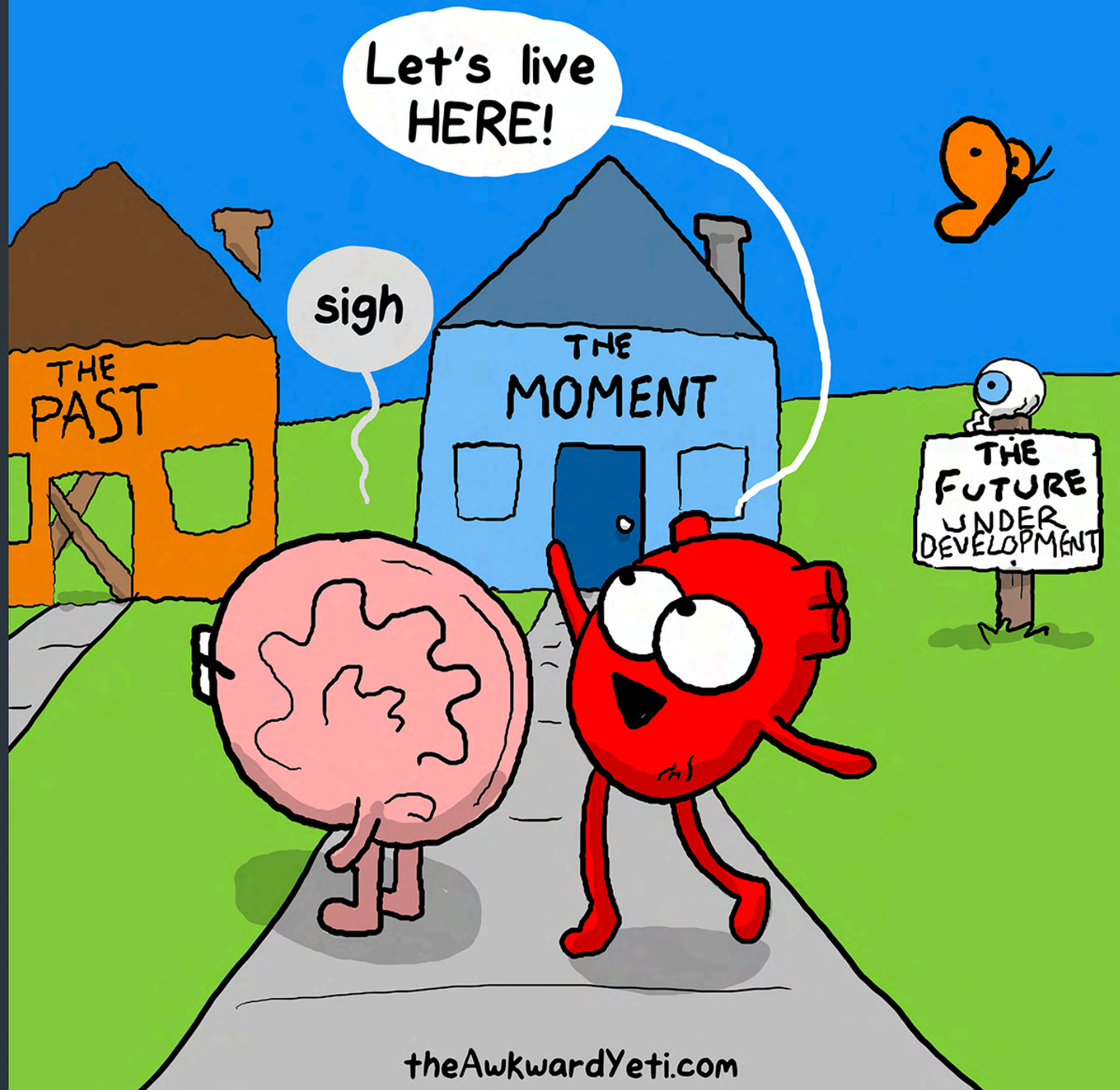
Self as Observer

Values

Committed Action

Acceptance

Cognitive Defusion



Let's live
HERE!

sigh

THE
PAST

THE
MOMENT

THE
FUTURE
UNDER
DEVELOPMENT

Be Present

- What is mindfulness?
 - Noticing what is happening right now
 - Paying attention in a specific way – on purpose and without judgement
- Why bother?
 - Most kids/teens have big emotions from time to time, mindfulness skills can help us to not get knocked down by them as easily or if we do get knocked down, we bounce back faster
 - It can also help us put space between a big emotion and our actions – then we can respond in a more clever way, without hurting our own feelings or the feelings of others
- How do I do it?
 - The most important part of mindfulness is practice so we're going to practice together today and then you're going to practice at home on your own or with your family

Do What Matters

Values

- Things that are important to us
- Something that gives meaning to our lives
- Like a point on a compass, it cannot be reached
- Like pizza

Goals

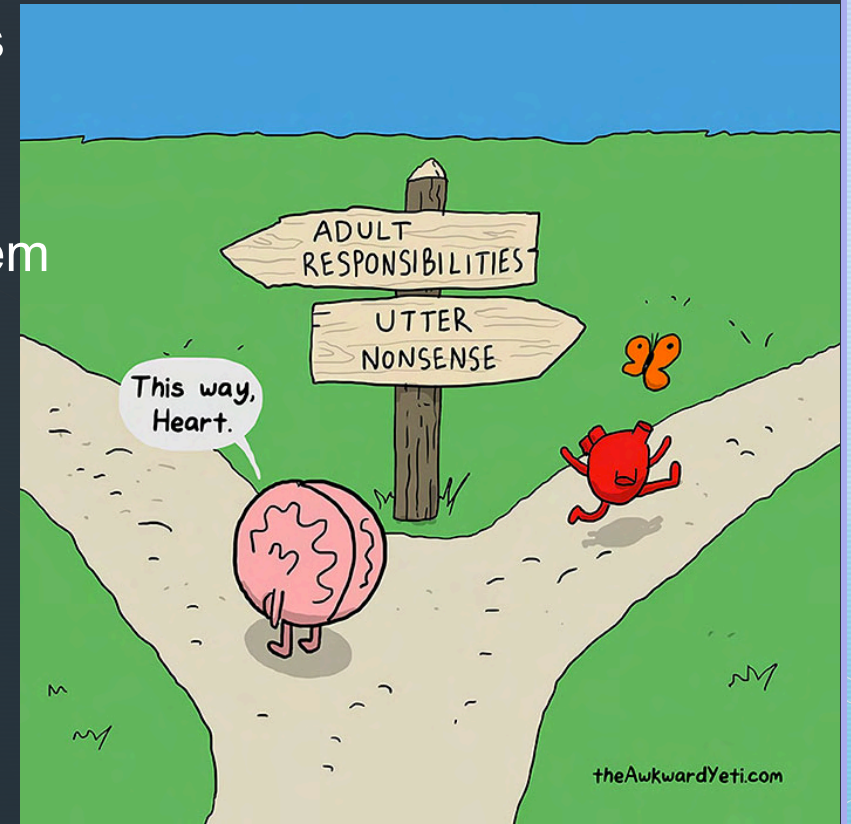
- Can be achieved or reached
- Can be easy or hard to achieve
- You can measure your progress toward a goal
- You keep setting new goals in life

Values and pain are two sides of the same coin – you can't get rid of one without getting rid of the other

A problem means that you think that things aren't going as well as you would like in a certain area

Open Up

- Cognitive defusion is a big word idea
- Separating who we are from the thoughts we have
- Thoughts are just thoughts - we are not our thoughts
- Looking at thoughts, rather than from thoughts
- Noticing thoughts, rather than being caught up in them
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdaCEO4WtDU>
- Passengers on the bus
- Thoughts as a superpower

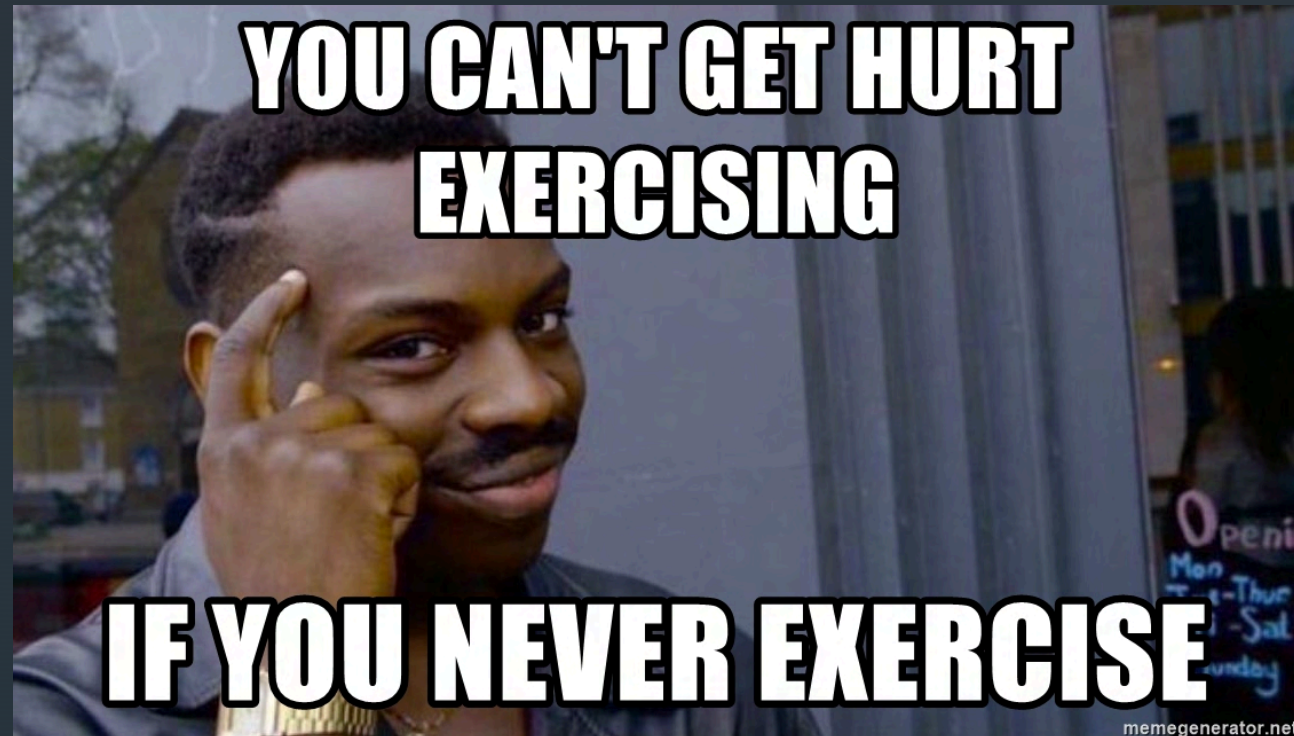




Open Up

- When to use it:
 - Before, during or after a challenging situation
 - When your thoughts aren't helpful
 - You are mentally somewhere else or in some other time
 - Your mind feels judgmental
 - Your thoughts feel old and familiar

Experiential Exercise



Acceptance

- The opposite of being open is being closed
- When closed, we shut ourselves off from living a valued and meaningful life
- Being closed also means struggling to avoid or get rid of unpleasant thoughts, feelings, memories, and sensations
- The solutions we use often become the problem

- What are some things that you try to avoid or get rid of?
- How is it working?

From Ciarrochi et al.

Struggling to get rid of anxiety and other emotions can be like playing tug of war with a monster.



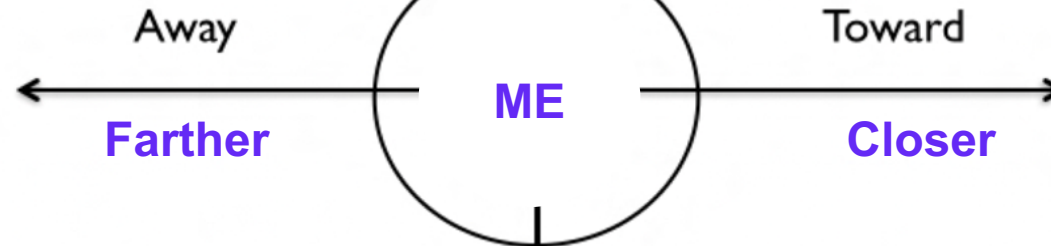
The Psychological Flexibility Model Matrix

Kevin L. Polk, Ph.D.

What do you do when you're hooked by the things below?
How does that work for you in the long run?

What do you do to move away from the unwanted stuff?

What is making your life smaller?



Outside

5-Senses Experiencing

What is one small thing you can do that would get you closer to _____?

What could you do to move toward who is important to you?

What could you do to make your life bigger?

Away

Farther

ME

Toward

Closer

What unwanted stuff shows up inside of you and gets in the way?
(like Fear)

What shows up on the inside that can stop you from doing those things or being with the people who are important to you?

Mental Experiencing

Inside

Who and what are important to you?

What do you like to do?

What do you like about _____?

What about those things are important to you?

Who do you like to do these things with?



Developmental Considerations

- Differences in reflecting on the past and future
- Saving face
- Working with important adults
- Language differences (pros and cons!)
- Use in conjunction with other child behavioral interventions (reward programs, parent management practices, skill building)

Benefits

- Experts on abstract and figurative language
- Enjoy metaphors, stories, and experiential exercises that are active and fun
- Imaginative and creative
- Less stringent verbal rules they live by and ACT can help preclude future psychological inflexibility
- Transdiagnostic
- Parents as "assistant coaches"

Showing up: Your presence in the room

- Pay attention to how we engage in addition to what we are teaching
 - Notice flexibility
 - Embody the processes
 - Engage pain and caring
 - Initiate, model, and support change
- Vulnerability, authenticity, genuineness
- Developmental process for therapists
- Internal checks and balances that can help you stay balanced
- Burnout

Assessment

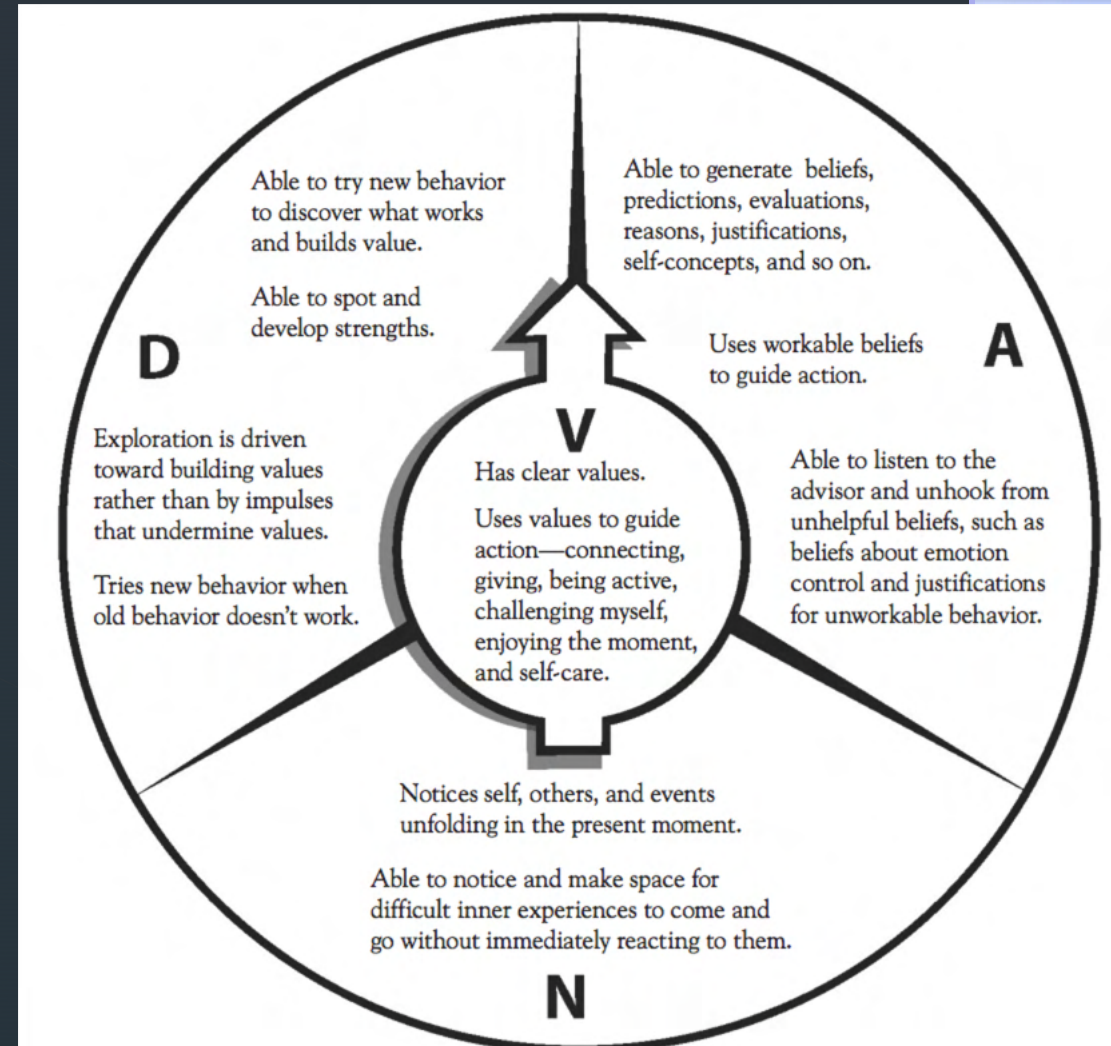
Acceptance and Fusion Questionnaire for Youth (AFQ-Y) and (AFQ-Y8)

- We want to know more about what you think, how you feel, and what you do. Read each sentence. Then, circle a number between 0-4 that tells how true each sentence is for you.

	Not at all True	A little True	Pretty True	True	Very True
1. My life won't be good until I feel happy.	0	1	2	3	4
2. My thoughts and feelings mess up my life.	0	1	2	3	4
3. If I feel sad or afraid, then something must be wrong with me.	0	1	2	3	4
4. The bad things I think about myself must be true.	0	1	2	3	4
5. I don't try out new things if I'm afraid of messing up.	0	1	2	3	4
6. I must get rid of my worries and fears so I can have a good life.	0	1	2	3	4
7. I do all I can to make sure I don't look dumb in front of other people.	0	1	2	3	4
8. I try hard to erase hurtful memories from my mind.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I can't stand to feel pain or hurt in my body.	0	1	2	3	4
10. If my heart beats fast, there must be something wrong with me.	0	1	2	3	4
11. I push away thoughts and feelings that I don't like.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I stop doing things that are important to me whenever I feel bad.	0	1	2	3	4
13. I do worse in school when I have thoughts that make me feel sad.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I say things to make me sound cool.	0	1	2	3	4
15. I wish I could wave a magic wand to make all my sadness go away.	0	1	2	3	4
16. I am afraid of my feelings.	0	1	2	3	4
17. I can't be a good friend when I feel upset.	0	1	2	3	4

Case Conceptualization

- Current situation and presenting issue
- Social and historical environment
- Self-view
- Social View



Resources

- Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (ACBS)
 - https://contextualscience.org/children_adolescents_families_sig
- <https://www.thrivingadolescent.com/>
 - DNA-V
 - Get Out of Your Mind & Into Your Life for Teens
 - The Thriving Adolescent
- Using the stuck matrix with kids
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efKKTPcNuHQ>

Questions, comments, considerations,
challenges, etc.



Contact: rachel.hopkins@ucebt.com

